

Preaching Christ...
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Date: 30 July 2022
Occasion: Conference keynote
Series: ----
Title: What if the Lord is not my Shepherd?
Passage: Psalm 23, John 10:11-18
Aim: To invoke Jesus' compassion for the sheep without a shepherd
Outline: **What if the Lord is not my shepherd?**
Sheep without a shepherd
Sharing Jesus for life

1. WHAT IF THE LORD IS NOT MY SHEPHERD?

Have you ever run Psalm 23 in reverse and asked – what happens when the Lord is **not** your shepherd?

Here's how it reads

The LORD is my NOT shepherd, I lack EVERYTHING.

² I have no green pastures in which to lie,
no quiet waters,

³ my soul is never refreshed.

I have no clue about the right path to take in life

⁴When I walk

through the valley of the shadow of death,^[a]

I fear every possible evil,

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for I am utterly alone,
and have no comfort.

⁵ My enemies are many.
my cup is empty.

⁶ Goodness and love DO NOT follow me
all the days of my life,
and I have no promise and no assurance that I dwell in the
house of the LORD forever.

That's quite **confronting**, isn't it?

And yet, that is how the **majority** of people **live**

Around **40%** of Australians now claim, 'no religion', but
the percentage of those who live without the Lord as their
shepherd... would easily be closer to 80% and probably
more.

Some of you have heard me share before – that Susan and
I, with our kids a few years back, had a couple of days
farm stay in NZ – farmer – quad bikes – dogs gathering,
herding. 3,000 thousand head or more – bringing them in
for pregnancy testing by ultra-sound...

He didn't know their **names**. They didn't **have** names.

But in the ancient world? – 1st century and back for years
- **one** shepherd to every **30-40** sheep.

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Shepherd **cared for each of their sheep individually.**

Sheep had **names.**

Each morning - after they had been cared for overnight by a hired hand – along with **other** sheep belonging to **other** shepherds – the **shepherd** would come and call just **his** sheep.

And **his** sheep and **only** his sheep - who knew his ***particular* voice** would **respond** and follow him out to **pasture** for the **day.**

As long as the sheep **followed** the **shepherd** – went where he **went** – **did** what he **said** – **followed** his **voice** – **responded** to his **commands** – then the sheep had it **good.**
Very good. /

Pasture. Water. Resting place.

Protection from thieves and wild animals.

Defence from enemies.

Care if injured or wounded.

Search party when lost.

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It was **good!** //

when they **followed** the **shepherd** there was **nothing they needed!** ////

that is what it is like for us... with the **Lord** as ***our*** **shepherd**

when we **follow** the **shepherd** – **hear** his **voice**, **HEED** his **voice** – **obey** his **commands** – there's **nothing** we **want...**
///

but for those who want nothing to **do** with **him...**

... who **claim** their **independence...**

The exact **opposite** is their reality....

They are....

2. SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

What do you think is the greatest **need** in the world today? ///

If you were asked to fill in a **survey**, what would you **say?**

Post COVID **economic recovery**

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An answer to the threat of **foot and mouth**

Inflation

Rising interest rates

Climate change and its threat in terms of floods and fires
and rising sea levels

World peace at threat – like we've not seen perhaps in
100 years...!

...all **massive** issues – **huge** concerns for us today... //

But there's a **greater need!**

... **WAY** more significant than **any** of those I've
mentioned...

Jesus tells us in **Matthew 9:36**

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them,
because they were harassed and helpless, **like sheep
without a shepherd.** //*

Like **sheep** without a **shepherd**... **harassed and helpless** –
as if... attacked by a **wolf** or **bear** or **lion**.

Bruised, battered and in **need** - **no one** to look **after** them

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That's what people are **like** who have **no shepherd**....!

Many are damaged from **sin** and **helpless**.

People feel like they have been **torn apart**.

Many live in **fear** and **despair** without knowing why

They have no **comfort** in the **present**, and no **hope** for the **future**...

Jesus sees people for what they **are** – **who** they are. //

he sees them / and he feels **compassion**. //

Compassion //

this is an unusual and remarkable word in the NT – it comes originally from the guts – a **churning**

ONLY used either **OF** Jesus or **BY** Jesus in the NT – to indicate that **he's deeply disturbed in his guts with love and pity //**

That's the **same** compassion led him to step out of **heaven!** — and to **lay down** his **life**...!! //

We walk down the street in our towns and see people going about their **day**... doing the best they can for their families, making **provision** for the future.... **Farming** their land as best as they are able... putting **food** on the **table**...

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But if they do not **know** the **Lord Jesus**...! / they are missing something... something **vital**.

Hope and **perspective** and **assurance** and **confidence** and **security** and **identity** and a **future**...! ////

Do you believe they're missing **out** because they don't know Jesus?

Do you believe they've missed the very **point of life**?

Do you believe they're missing **forgiveness**?

Do you believe they are in eternal **danger** if they don't know **Jesus**? ///

Do **YOU** see them / as **harassed** and **helpless**? //

Do YOU feel **any** of **Jesus' compassion**? //

then Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few"

And he says – **pray** for more people... not paid professionals – but more **people** who will share **Jesus** – for life... who will lead them to the Great **Shepherd** – to **find LIFE!!** ////

I want to ask you – do you think a priority of **your** church, is to share **Jesus** so that **others** might have **life**?

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Does **Jesus' compassion** for **sheep** without a **shepherd** – **motivate** your church into **action**?

Does the desire to **share Jesus** more **effectively** – cause you to **question** the value of **this** activity, or the relevance of **that** activity? //

Does Jesus' compassion for the lost, get your **creativity going** – so that with a sense of **excitement** and **urgency** – you're working out how you can reach **others** with the saving **news** of **Jesus**?? ///

3. SHARING JESUS FOR LIFE

Our diocese has been ministering across 1/3 of NSW for over **150 years!**

Without a **doubt** there has been some **great ministry** through that **time**.

We **honour** all those who **proclaimed** the **gospel**, taught the **Bible**, **sought** to **reach** the **lost**

Who made **sacrifices**, gave their **lives** without **reserve** to the **work** of the **gospel**... who came from the **eastern seaboard** or from the **UK** and rode **horseback** to take the gospel to remote **properties** and held **services** under **trees**

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and **shared meals** with any who would open their **hearts**
and their **homes**... //

Who served as **dedicated lay people** or **ordained clergy**
with **little** or **no thanks**... **little human reward**... and
sometimes seeing little **fruit** from their **labours**. /

If **you're** among those who have worked **long** and **hard** –
at the **coal face** in the **parishes** – who have **laboured on**
without **clergy** or even **with** clergy – who have **never given**
up – have tried **new things** – run **activities** – **fundraised** - -
or if you've been **supporting** that work on diocesan
boards and **committees** through **many trials** and
challenges - ... **thank you!!!** ///

What we are **NOT** saying in launching a plan for the **future**
is that nothing **good** has happened in the **past**!! //

It is **ONLY** because there was something good in the past
that we still **HAVE** churches going **today**!!

BUT ///

But – by **any measurement** – we find ourselves now in a
dire position.

With some exceptions... yes – hear me say with **some**
exceptions –

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our churches are **tiny**

our congregations are **aged**

we're **not** seeing new people come in the door or come to Christ

we have **very** little across the board by way of **youth** or **children's** ministry

many of our churches have no Bible study **groups**

16/28 have no **clergy**...

And **of** those **16** – around **half** have so **few** people they can't **afford** clergy /

Our diocesan **survey** suggested that the few of us pray or **read** our **Bible** through the week

Many in the survey commented they have **never** been invited into another's home

Survey suggested that many of us have **never** invited any one to **church** or anything **connected to church**...

On the whole – with some exceptions - we're just not making an **impact** for **Jesus!! //**

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Why are we in this **position**?

Some might say – that's just **church in country NSW!**

But **Narrabri** – a town of just over 7,000 people... you know how many people in the Anglican church there? **150-160**. Youth group of **20**.

Glenn Innes – again – not unlike some of our towns – **6,200 people** – around **80-90** in church.... **12-20** in **Sunday school**

It's not just church in country towns.

Why are we in this position?

Because all our **time and energy** of the last few years **corporately** as a **diocese** has been sapped by the **CBA court case** and **redress**?

Yes – **undoubtedly** that was **costly** for **ministry**....

Why are we in this position? //

Because we have been **content** to keep **doing church** as it's **always** been **done**... //

And in **some** places – not just **content** to do church as it

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has **always** been **done**... but actually **stubbornly insistent**
that church be **done** as it has **always been done!**

(not only talking about Sunday services... but whole
approach to church)...

How do I **know**?

Because in places where church has started to be done
differently – a little more **relaxed services**... more
intentional activities around **Bible studies** and
evangelism, I can show you **life** and **change** and
growth.....

In **Narrabri** and **Glenn Innes** as I mentioned...

...but here **too** in our **own** diocese.... **Millthorpe**, the **new**
service at the **Cathedral**... the monthly **evening** service in
Rylstone... / ministry in **Forbes and Parkes and Dubbo** –
where there is more **contemporary music** and a more
relaxed feel in the services AND more focus on **Bible**
teaching... offering regular **Bible studies**, more **intentional**
children's ministry... **Playgroups, youth groups**, one on
one **discipleship**... **Jesus Explained** course... and you can
see a **difference**. //



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Is about

SHARING

Sharing Jesus so people **know** him //

It's about **JESUS**

I.e. - making Jesus the centre of **our lives**, our **church**, our **preaching**, our **services**, our **Bible studies**, our **activities...**
///

And it's about **LIFE...** so that people **come to life** – and so that we become **passionate** and **equipped** and **ready** to share **Jesus** for the **term of our natural life.** ///

These are my **hopes** – my **prayer** – my **longing** for our **churches**: that we become a

A **MISSIONAL** church that is lovingly connecting with their community and effectively sharing Jesus.

A **JESUS - CENTRED** church where Jesus is worshipped in spirit and truth and the Bible is clearly taught.

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A **DISCIPLING** church
producing life-long disciples
of Jesus who are trained and
equipped for ministry.



now you may want to push back – **insulted** as it were
– *are you suggesting Mark our churches are **NOT** like this
now?*

Well... the answer is – on the whole – **it is true: they are
NOT like this...!**

...and I think our survey – especially in the **comments** –
showed many of **YOU** don't think so **either!**

Our survey showed a lot of **sadness...** about **disconnected,
unwelcoming** churches making no **impact** on their
communities...! //

Brothers and sisters... we are at a **crossroads //**

Unless we do something **different** to that which we **have
been** doing – then I would **predict** that our current **28**
parishes – by the time we get to **2030** – will be **half** that
many at **14!! //**

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all you have to do is see the **average attendance** and the average **AGE** of those attending – to realise that in another **8 years** – **most** of the people **currently attending**, will be with the **Lord!! //**

That's quite a **shock**, isn't it?

Now - I know **some** of you are **aware** of that – because **you've told me**.

And you might say to me... **hang on Mark** – what can **WE** do??

We have no **minister**

We have no **resources** to do anything different

We wouldn't know where to **start! ///**

And **this** is the beauty of this **plan**

No **minister** – **16** people in church at the moment – what could you **do??**



From the **SHARING** column

*Plan some non-threatening **social** events for inviting friends*

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From the **JESUS** column

*Foster dependence upon Jesus by a commitment to regular corporate **PRAYER** that underpins and upholds all church programs and ministries*



From the **LIFE** column

*All church members encouraged to join a Bible study group – at 16 you can all be in the one **group**... you could go to **someone's house** – watch **my sermon** – and someone **lead a discussion** – if I knew you wanted to do that – I'd write **discussion** questions every **week!** ///*

Now – **none** of those things require a **minister** or extra **resources**.... Just a **passion** for **making a difference**...

And I **guarantee** that just doing **those three things**... will start to **change** your life as a **church** – AND will mean you'll want to do **more**... you'll **pick up** the **plan** and **think** – well – that wasn't **too** hard – we want to do **more now!!**
//

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SHARING column – reaching those **sheep** without a shepherd



JESUS column – making sure **WE know** and **love** and **serve** and **honour** and **worship** and live for **Jesus the Good Shepherd**



The **LIFE** column – practical steps to train and equip us to be workers in the fields which are ripe for harvest... in a **lifetime of service**



In the **seminars**, Kevin, Andrew and Bec, will make clear that **no church** is expected to go to work and tick off **every point here...!** In fact, that would be **impossible!** //

The plan has been designed to give you **ideas** – plant some **thoughts** – spark some **vision** –

...it is designed to show you **how** to begin making just a **small difference...**

It is designed so you can pick out the **points** which might be **helpful** and **relevant** and **significant** in **YOUR context...**

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And you'll see that p2 is **blank** so you can bring ideas from the **front** to the **back** which you **decide** to **work on...**

Take this back to **church** – to your **PC** – to a **parish planning day...**

We'll **support** you – we'll send one of our team to a **strategic planning day** to help you work out what might be possible at **your church** and what might **make** an **immediate difference!! ///**



But **remember** the **big picture...**

Remember what I've asked you to **consider**

Sheep without a **shepherd //**

Whose **everyday reality** is the **frightening prospect** of **Psalm 23** in **reverse... //**

And then **recall** Jesus' **compassion...**

...and then **//** as you also begin to feel **Jesus' gut-wrenching compassion....** Take some **small steps forward...**

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...so that **you** and your **church**, are **about** the **work** of –
the mission of -

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